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# Lecturers' perceptions on factors influencing the implementation of bilingual instruction in Indonesian universities

Implementation  
of BI

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore lecturers' perceptions on factors that affect the implementation of bilingual instruction (BI) policy in Indonesian higher education.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This qualitative study used 15 lecturers who taught in BI programs in three Indonesian universities. The data were gained through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview data were analyzed via thematic approach.

**Findings** – The findings of the study suggest a number of factors influencing the implementation of BI, including the support from lecturers, leadership, and government. The availability of adapted curriculum and systematic assessment also influences the successful implementation of BI in Indonesian tertiary education.

**Practical implications** – The findings of this study have implications for the success of similar programs and the ways to gain understanding of BI within higher education contexts.

**Originality/value** – BI research is not new; however, little information is related to BI in Indonesia. This work contributes to a growing body of literature that explore BI and education factors within higher education setting. The significance of this study is to raise greater understanding of several important factors that influence the implementation of BI policy within university settings.

**Keywords** Higher education, Indonesia, Lecturers, Bilingual factors, Bilingual instruction, Implementation of policy

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Bilingual instruction (BI) in higher education is of great interest and debates among scholars and researchers in education and bilingual studies. BI is related to the two languages offered for tuition in an institution (Plessis, 2006). BI contributes to the re-construction of national identities (Tsui and Tollefson, 2006), increased awareness of cultural investment (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991), and enhanced intercultural understanding (Hornberger, 2002; Sercu, 2004). A number of studies proved that BI brings added value to learners (Lindholm-Leary, 2012; May *et al.*, 2004) and helps learners to immerse in English speaking as an additional language (Tian, 2014). For these reasons, bilingual instruction program (BIP) is worthy for the research.

In Indonesia, research on BI has been conducted in several areas, for example, investment and bilingual education in Indonesian universities (Amirullah *et al.*, 2015), and English bilingual education in an Indonesian public school (Fitriati, 2015). These studies emphasized on motivations of educators in implementing bilingual education. Building upon the previous studies above, this study focuses on exploring the factors that affect the effective implementation of BI policy. The significance of this study is to raise greater understanding of several important factors and their impacts on the implementation of bilingual policy within university settings.

In the next section, it discusses the literature on the factors influencing implementation of BI. The following section describes the research methodology and findings. The discussion of this study is then presented followed by conclusions.



## Literature review

The literature review of this research covers two important concepts: factors and effective implementation of BI and BI in Indonesia.

### *Research on factors and effective implementation of BI*

Bilingual factor is defined as “a set of consistent factors that tend to contribute to successful student outcomes in educational institutions in general and bilingual [instruction] programs in particular” (Howard *et al.*, 2007, p. 7). Seminal studies on effective BI (May *et al.*, 2004; Montecel and Danini, 2002) argue that the factors that influence the effective implementation include teachers’ collegiality, teachers’ professionalism and students’ proficiency level. Other studies (Cotton, 1995; De Jong, 2002) have also found that effective BI is influenced by other features such as positive interaction between teacher-students, staff and teachers’ morale, and cultures that support bilingual education.

Basically, effective implementation of BI is defined as the implementations that are likely to be successful in promoting academic achievement or other academic outcomes (e.g. language proficiency, school attendance, motivation) (Lindholm-Leary, 2005a). Some bilingual studies (Darling-Hammond, 1999; De Jong, 2002) argue that there is link between teacher quality and professionalism and language and academic improvement. However, other studies such as Marzano (2003), maintain that the academic achievement and language proficiency of learners are affected by the student-level factors (background knowledge, age and exposure to language).

Effective implementation of BI policy depends on the availability of support within the institution. Some studies found that the leadership roles and support play major roles in initiating the change and implementation (May *et al.*, 2004). Other studies also argue that effective implementation of bilingual policy relies heavily on high level of exposure to the target language (Howard *et al.*, 2007) and the ideological and implementation spaces that are created within the institution (Hornberger, 2005). However, there are also other factors at work: effective realization of BI policy is influenced by national language policy, language ideology and language practices (Spolsky, 2004).

The effective factors of the implementation of BI, particularly in higher education contexts are important elements in achieving bilingual education goals which consist of biliteracy, bilingual and interculturally competent graduates (Cenoz, 2012). In addition, other studies argue that the effective implementation of instruction is predisposed by other factors such as wider socio-political factors (May *et al.*, 2004), and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2013). Moreover, Canagarajah (1999) commented that the implementation of language policy and bilingualism have an emphasis on local, social and historical circumstances rather than external dominant ideologies.

The key driving factors which embedded within institutions that contribute for the realization of BI include the goal of the program (Baker, 2011; May, 2011), the level of immersion instruction and intercultural and learner-focused curriculum (Howard *et al.*, 2007), staff and educator professional development and monitoring and evaluation (Lindholm-Leary, 2012; May *et al.*, 2004). These factors support the study’s views that the successful implementation of BI are an interconnected factors as an entity that drives the realization of the program.

In a recent study of BI factors conducted in the United Arab Emirates, Gallagher (2011, p. 62) identified that “bilingual education and [instruction] is likely to confer linguistic, academic and socioeconomic benefits on future generations of Emirati school leavers. However, the acquisition of biliteracy will probably be challenging because of the diglossic features of Arabic, as well as the linguistic distance between Arabic and English. Because of the ambiguity of international research findings with regard to the appropriate age to begin second language learning, as well as uncertainty about the merits of simultaneous vs sequential teaching of biliteracy,”

Gallagher further suggested that research can be undertaken in in other contexts into the effects of BI factors on learners and teachers. Following Gallagher's suggestion, this paper explores how these factors are perceived and experienced by lecturers who taught bilingual higher education programs.

### *BI in Indonesia*

BI policy is the implementation of the Law of National Education System No. 23 (2003) Article 33 Verse 3: Bahasa asing dapat digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar pada satuan pendidikan tertentu untuk mendukung kemampuan berbahasa asing peserta didik (Foreign language can be used as a medium of instruction to support learners' foreign language ability) (National Education System Law, 2003) and Higher Education Law No. 12 Article 37 Verse 3: Bahasa asing dapat digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar di perguruan tinggi (Foreign language can be used a medium of instruction in higher education) (Higher Education Law, 2012). Both constitutions become legal basis of the implementation of bilingual education in tertiary level. The foreign language mostly used is "English."

The implementation of Indonesia's bilingual/immersion policy is a response to globalization. Globalization is effected by two inseparable mediational means; technology and English (Pennycook, 2010). In non-English speaking country like Indonesia, English is a foreign language taught formally at schools from primary to university levels. Within such circumstances, Tsui and Tollefson (2006) argued that the exposure to English has merely relied on translation and has made a *lingua franca* indispensable. As a result, many tertiary institutions in non-English speaking countries are more likely to put in place English either as a *lingua franca* or as a medium of instruction. For the context of Indonesia, English is used along with Indonesian as medium of instruction in many higher education institutions.

## **Methodology**

### *Research design*

The descriptive qualitative design was used in this study. The descriptive qualitative was an appropriate tool to seek an in-depth description of an event, a case or a change (Sandelowski, 2000). For the purpose of this research, the case was the implementation of bilingual higher education. The cases selected were three bilingual programs from three different universities. They were BIP A from a public university in the west part of Indonesia, BIP B from a private university in the central part of Indonesia, and BIP C from a teacher training university in the eastern part of Indonesia.

### *Data collection and participants*

Primary data were gained through semi-structured interviews of 15 participants which lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Six of them aged 30 s, five aged 40 s, and four aged 50 s. Nine of the participants with Masters' qualification and six were doctoral degrees. The interviews were mostly conducted in Indonesian, but participants often switched from English to Indonesia or vice versa. All transcripts were sent back to the participants for the verification of contents and meanings. The diverse variety of participants will contribute to provide more convincing and accurate conclusions (Yin, 2009) and provide comprehensive understanding of the case (Patton, 2002). This longitudinal field work was carried out from June 2013 to June 2014. During field visits, field notes were made and written documents were also collected to bolster the primary data.

### *Data analysis*

The data were initially analyzed using open coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) which then thematically analyzed (Attride-Stirling, 2001): reading whole materials, initial codes,

searching themes, reviewing themes, and core themes or categories. The first stage was to read the whole data, and then perform initial coding. The next was searching the themes and reviewing the emergent themes by making connections between them and making comparisons between categories and codes. Then, selective themes were put into matrices (lists of columns containing themes arranged from specific to general) to enable us to identify core categories. The core categories were refined and articulated in order to achieve meaningful and theoretical categories (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) which informed the findings and outcomes of the research.

## Findings

### *Adapted standardized curriculum*

BI employs a combination of the national curriculum and an adapted standardized curriculum from partner universities. The context of bilingual curriculum is similar to what Maria describes as:

It is a mixed of national standard and adapted international standard curricula. On the one hand, it is important to maintain the national interest and standards, and to accommodate and incorporate what is accepted across the globe. On the other hand, it is recommended to keep up with state of the art internationally recognised curriculum (Maria, BIP C).

The national components of the BI curriculum are established based on the values, beliefs and tradition of the Indonesian multicultural society. There four components of bilingual curriculum representing Indonesian values: religious studies, five basic principles (*Pancasila*), Indonesian citizenship, and Indonesian Language. All four subjects are taught across all disciplines in higher education. In addition, specific elements of competencies are designed by the university to suit the needs and demands of employers locally and nationally. Ningrum (BIP B), argues that “it is vital to include important aspects of nationalism and aspects of competencies that are required by government and non-government agencies and companies in the curriculum.”

In addition, the curriculum components of these BIPs include international topics. The process of importing global topics is facilitated via the adoption of a standardized curriculum from partner universities in developed countries. The aim of the curriculum is to have similar content with what is taught in partner universities, thus assisting future graduates to be prepared to study overseas and be recognized and accredited by these institutions. Tasrif (BIP A), supports this:

The aim of adapting the curriculum is to have parallel content with what is taught in overseas universities, including handbooks and support readings. Therefore our students possess similar understandings to their counterparts in universities overseas. This will make it easier for them to pursue their further studies particularly in the OECD countries.

The main components of the adapted curriculum, as Narina (BIP B) suggests, relate to the capacity to adjust the curriculum to suit the local context in the areas of “the key competencies and supporting competencies.” The key competencies are reflected in the use of the common required readings and materials to those used in partner universities. Similarly, Fatiha argues: “What it is offered in this university is actually similar to what is offered in other universities.” Mufira (BIP C) asserts: “This helps our universities be more open to what is happening around the world.”

### *Leadership role*

Participants identified various types of leadership that support the implementation of BI. Leaders can facilitate the process of implementing BIPs, providing rewards, and allocating

budgets for staff and lecturer professional development. This section presents three pivotal roles of leaders when putting BIPs into practice.

Most participants agree that mediating the process of the BIPs implementation is a priority. Mudasir (BIP A) describes the important role of leaders when facilitating BIPs. He argues that “a leader should stand in front of everyone else to support the programs.” He gave examples of how a dean performs a supportive role in the implementation of BI:

At the initial stage, the dean invited us to have several meetings to discuss the strategies and actions to realise the program. Then the team was established to organise, monitor and implement the program. It was decided that the team be chaired by the director of the program (Mudasir, BIP A).

Sharing responsibilities and providing clear job descriptions are important leadership roles when supporting the implementation. Fatiha (BIP B) states that “a leader has to ensure that all the required attributes to implement an immersion program are available and ensure the delegation of roles and responsibilities with the right people who are capable of doing them. Inviting external experts to comment and provide suggestions in relation to the programs is also relevant.” Akiro (BIP C), supports the sharing of roles in the implementation of bilingual programs. She asserts that “several teams are established which have regular scheduled meetings. Each team is assigned to specific tasks and responsibilities so that they can truly focus on their jobs.” More importantly, she states that “the team is committed to their work and provides progress reports to the dean.”

Another role that participants in this study identified concerned the provision of rewards and appreciation to those in the BIPs. Most lecturer participants mentioned that financial rewards in terms of earning additional incentives other than standard salary was important. Bahrin (BIP A) confirms that “rewards given by faculty motivate us psychologically to perform the best that we can do.” He maintains that “the amount of reward is not important, but what is essential is that the leader cares about us and the work we do here.” He asserts:

I do get special incentives other than a normal salary for teaching in this program. I think it is reward for my extra effort in preparing teaching materials, readings, and all support materials in English (Bahrin, BIP A).

Similarly, Ningrum (BIP B), claims that “bilingual instruction programs would not run according to prior planning without robust involvement and pro-active support from the dean.” More importantly, she states: “The extra work and extra energy spent on this (bilingual) program is rewarded by the leader providing extra incentives.” Sudiron (BIP C) confirms that “I am astonished by what has given to me by my faculty. I do not expect more than normal remuneration.” He asserts that “all the hard work spent on implementing the program pays off.”

The final role participants identified related to leaders providing equal opportunities for all staff and lecturers to access professional development programs. To support professional development of staff and lecturers, the leaders in these programs allocated specified budgets for English language training and methods of teaching content through English training courses. Andre (BIP A) argues that “all lecturers are given opportunities to join fee free English training.” Interestingly, as Andre maintains “English training programs are customized according to available time and need of lecturers and staff.” He claims that “English training is available to everyone without exception, either lecturers who have graduated from overseas English universities or those who graduated from domestic universities.”

Narina (BIP B) commented on the types of customized English training programs that leaders in these programs provide for academics and administrative staff. The first type is in-service English training courses. Narina states that “the in-service English training program is held two hours every afternoon on week days.” The second is full-day weekend

English training. She maintains that “the weekend English course is offered for staff and academics who can’t attend weekday English programs.” The third is the intensive English program. Narina articulates that “this intensive training program is facilitated by independent English institution either in the same city or in other city.” For these intensive programs, she confirms that “academics and staff have to take official leave of absence, but retain their salary from their institutions.”

Sutimin (BIP B) commented on the ways leaders offer language support for academics and administrative staff. He states:

All lecturers and staff in bilingual programs are given free English language training. English training is delivered by both native speakers and some domestic but competent language instructors. More interesting is that the English training is organised according to our needs and available time. It is all paid for by the institution.

Gifran (BIP C) exhibited his joy at the way a leader supports their English competency improvement. He indicates that “I like special time allocation and arrangement with the language instructor to receive training during a week.” He asserts that “it is up to us whether to take full advantage of it or not.” In this case, leaders are very supportive and pro-active in creating new partnership channels and opportunities for bilingual students to engage internationally. This highlights strong leadership support as one of the essential aspects to sustain the implementation of bilingual higher education policy. If there is limited or no support from the leader, the program is less likely to be successfully realised.

#### *Qualified lecturers*

Most lecturers teaching in BIPs are qualified in terms of their subject mastery, English language, and intercultural understanding. They are qualified because they graduate from masters and doctoral degrees, the majority of them from overseas institutions. These three attributes are embedded in most lecturers’ teaching in bilingual programs in this study. In terms of subject mastery, lecturers were originally recruited to teach specific subjects in their discipline fields. For example, Mudasir (BIP A) who is a lecturer in Statistics, indicates: “I finished my Bachelor degree majoring in Statistics, continued in my master’s and PhD in Statistics, and was subsequently recruited to teach Statistics.” Similarly, Jarkowi (BIP B) who is a lecturer in International Politics, maintains that “I graduated from a Bachelor of Political Science majoring in International Politics, and then completed a master’s and doctoral level in International Political Issues.” Moreover, Sudiron (BIP C), who is a Lecturer in Management and Leadership, completed his Bachelors, Master’s and Doctoral Degrees in the field of Management and Leadership. Educationally, there is consistency of evidence showing participants’ mastery of their field of studies.

In terms of English language competency, 80 percent of lecturers teaching in BIPs in this study have experienced learning in English speaking universities. Prior to studying in English speaking universities overseas, those lecturers joined intensive English training programs and they had to attain an IELTS score of at least 6.5 with no band (academic listening, academic reading, speaking and writing) less than a score of 6.0. In addition, 20 percent of them participated in domestic English training courses that related to their teaching of content. Those English capabilities are non-native like, but lecturers can convey and communicate their ideas clearly when teaching in bilingual programs through the English medium of instruction. Maria (BIP C), for example, admits that “I enjoy teaching content via an English medium of instruction; despite this I am not like natural English speakers.”

#### *Systemic assessment*

It is interesting to note that the special assessment unit, the quality assurance unit (QAU), was established since the implementation of BIPs. The QAU aims to facilitate the realization



of these programs. The QAU assesses not only the progress of students' language competence and content mastery but also the lecturers' competence and teaching delivery performance within BIPs. The students' language proficiencies are assessed every semester by using institutional Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL)-Like Tests. Ningrum (BIP C) enunciates examples of language assessment for students:

Students' progress and language proficiencies are assessed every six months. Their English should improve starting from 500 TOEFL score at the entrance period and they have to reach at least 550 before graduating from this program. I have seen students working hard to achieve that.

Similarly, all lecturers who teach in immersion programs are evaluated at the end of semester. The QAU implements two types of assessments: questionnaires are sent to students' e-mails and focus group discussions are attended by representative of each class. To ensure the successful implementation of these programs, Gifran (BIP C) admits that there is assessment of lecturers in BIPs:

As a lecturer, we are assessed and monitored by the QAU. Of course it is not a punishment, but such assessment is given back to lecturers after we hand in the entire grade. It is good way to see which one need improvement and which one needs to be maintained. I see this assessment in a positive way.

Lecturer participants view the assessment as constructive feedback. Andre argues that "the good thing is that it does not judge us whether wrong or right, but it gives us suggestions and recommendations for better teaching." Jarkowi (BIP B) indicates that "the assessment is important to see our drawbacks and our strengths. Even though sometimes I disagree with that, I have to accept it, that's the way it is."

The systematic assessment of students applied in bilingual programs aims to ensure and facilitate the implementation of the bilingual programs particularly in terms of teaching and learning. This also ensures that students are able to achieve the standards of target language proficiency as one attribute of the imagined identities, which is being proficient in the target language.

### *Interdepartmental collaboration*

Participants in this study felt that interdepartmental collaboration within an institution context is one of the contributing aspects in the implementation of BIPs. Participants indicated that the sharing of resources, utilities and equipment between bilingual and non-bilingual programs within the faculty became evidence of the importance of collaborative work within internal institutional departments. Bahrin (BIP A), argues that "some resources may be available in other departments that we do not have." He provides further examples of inviting lecturers of English from other faculties to teach in bilingual programs and "sharing labs for practicum with the other departments."

Hadi (BIP C), another lecturer, felt that collaborative work aims to "share common understanding and trust as a vital aspect in establishing mutual efforts within an institution." The collaborative work has been supported by each head of department, as Mudasir comments:

Every head of the department knows that we share resources, such as labs, library, language clinics, and computer lab and often invite people from other departments to teach here (Mudasir, BIP A).

In addition, collaborative work between departments strengthens their mutual trust and understanding. Tasrif (BIP A) claims that "we have regular meetings with department and other faculties to discuss issues related to the sharing of practicum labs." He asserts that "we have more agreement than disagreement in several things, but that is natural in an organisation.

The most important is we end with some agreements.” Akiro (BIP C) summarizes: “This is part of developing understanding between us; we tend to know more about other outside, but we know less what is inside among us.”

The interdepartmental collaborative work highlights the development of intercultural understanding among lecturers and students in the institutions. This leads them to possess one of the imagined identity attributes, which is, interculturally competent graduates.

### *Government support*

There is strong support from the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture to realize these BI programs. There are different ranges of support from the government to succeed, and to sustain the implementation of BI programs, including academic and financial matters such as professional development scholarships, grants to invite native speakers of English teaching bilingual programs and international seminars and publications. Despite being open to any academics, the government prioritizes grants allocated for BI programs and activities.

Mudasir (BIP A) describes the operational grants from the government to support bilingual programs. He states: “We receive special grants from the government for operational activities of a bilingual program: Rp. 1,000,000,000 per year (approximately AUS \$ 100,000) since 2008.” This is a large amount of money in these Indonesian contexts. In addition to the operational grants, the government exclusively allocates special grants for professional development training programs and conferences. Andre (BIP A) asserts that “I have just returned from International Conference that was covered by government conference and publication grants.” Jarkowi claims that “the grant is very competitive and open to any bilingual academics.”

Government support is crucial to run the bilingual programs. The government grants will ensure the sustainability of the programs and maintain the availability of resources to bolster the application of bilingual programs.

### **Discussion**

The findings show that BI is most obviously seen as the additive bilingualism which fosters the mastery of subject contents and target language proficiency (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; May, 2011; Thomas and Collier, 2002). The impact of additive bilingualism brings cognitive, social, and educational advantages (May *et al.*, 2004). In terms of the adapted standardized curriculum, it may be true that harmonizing curriculum from partner-university overseas is an important attribute that impact on the balancing needs of national curriculum and international interests.

This research suggests that the standardization of curriculum is not only performed by the institution and state, but also by international partners. This findings contrast the idea of bilingual curriculum is standardized by the district and state (Howard *et al.*, 2007). The support of the informed leadership and intercultural competent teacher is one of the essential factors to sustain effective implementation of BE policy in higher education. The informed leadership is an instance of whole institution commitment which at least provide administrative support (May *et al.*, 2004). If there is no or limited support from the leader, the program is less likely to be successfully implemented.

The implications of the identification of these factors of BI within higher education can lead to more understanding of bilingual practices and more importantly can become indicator of good practises (Howard *et al.*, 2007; Lindholm-Leary, 2005b; May *et al.*, 2004) for the implementation of BIP in higher education context.

Previous studies in effective BI (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas and Collier, 2002; May *et al.*, 2004) argue that successful bilingual education implementation is strongly determined by internal factors such as goal, curriculum, instruction, leadership support,

intercultural competent lecturers, and assessment but this study argues that the effective implementation of BI within higher education contexts is not only determined by the previous identified features, but also by an interdepartmental collaboration within an institution. The authors also argue that without interdepartmental collaboration, the project may be implemented ineffectively due to the importance of sharing bilingual resources within an institution.

We argue that the factors of BI practices can guide the achievement of the project implementation more easily. For example, the implementation of immersion education in New Zealand context (May *et al.*, 2004) and dual language programs in the USA (Lindholm-Leary, 2012) may not be effective and successful if there is no strong support from internal factors of an institution. However, if all factors are elaborated in the form of benchmark which includes a number of guiding principles of practices, the effectiveness of the program implementation is more likely achievable.

## Conclusion

This study has identified these factors that have significantly influenced Indonesian higher education institutions ability to implement BIPs effectively. The ability of universities in Indonesian contexts to provide additive goals, adapted bilingual curriculum, instructional levels, strong leadership support and systematic assessment helps them to effectively implement instruction program. More important still is the interdepartmental collaboration can contribute to successful implementation of BI. We argue that these factors of BI practices can influence the effective implementation of BI in higher education setting.

This study suggests that the availability of these factors could lead to the sustainable and effective implementation of BI within higher education. The findings could inform educators and policy makers on making decisions about internal features that influence effective implementation of bilingual education in general.

This research was carried out within universities in Indonesian context and the findings may provide a new perspective on factors influencing the implementation of BI policy, particularly in developing countries. Future research needs to explore not only other factors such as teachers' collegiality, but also external factors that influence BI implementation. Future research also needs to be conducted within larger samples in multiple sites. Within multiple settings will contribute to broader population and extends our findings by providing more comprehensive evidence to bolster the findings in this paper.

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